EXCISE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 15, 1978

Dear Senator Bentsen:

This is in response to your letter of February 24, with which you forwarded to the Department a letter from your constituent [redacted] of Houston, Texas, [redacted] writes that the United States is not pressing the claim for physical damages to the USS Liberty which was attacked by Israeli forces in June 1967. (b)(6)

In your letter you state that a previous letter from [redacted] was sent to the Department by your office in October 1977 and that no reply was received. A check of our files does not reveal any record of a letter from [redacted] or from your office. (b)(6)

The United States has consistently maintained since 1967 that the Government of Israel is responsible for payment of compensation--both for the loss of life and injury which resulted from the incident and for damage to the vessel.

On December 29, 1967, our Embassy in Tel Aviv presented to the Government of Israel claims totaling $3,323,500 on behalf of the families of the 34 men killed in the attack. After negotiations, the Government of Israel paid the full amount on May 27, 1968. On March 28, 1969, our Embassy presented claims totaling $3,452,275 on behalf of the 164 injured members of the crew. The Government of Israel paid the full amount claimed on April 28, 1969.

The Honorable
Lloyd M. Bentsen,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 8/5/83
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
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RELEASE DENIED☒ in part
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS (b)(6)

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With regard to the U.S. government claim for damage to the vessel, on July 1, 1968 the United States presented a claim for $7.6 million to the government of Israel. The Israeli government denied responsibility but offered to pay a nominal sum, which offer was rejected.

We shall continue to take every appropriate occasion to press the claims issue and to remind the Government of Israel of its obligations in this regard. Our objective remains that of obtaining adequate compensation for the damages inflicted upon the Liberty in accordance with international law. We shall be approaching the Government of Israel again in the nearest future.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

Drafted by: NEA/IAI:CHill/MGAnderson:vbj
Ext. 21686 3/9/78

Clearance: NEA/IAI:WBSmithII
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